

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith  
Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, January 11, 2012

### Present:

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair  
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair  
Dave Culmer  
Ramon Rodriguez  
Stephanie Stone  
Steve Rosmarin

#### Commissioners

Mark MacCarley  
Fred Flores

### County Department

#### Military and Veterans Affairs

Colonel Joseph Smith, Director  
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

#### Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Carvel Gay called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m., and stated that Chair Archuleta is on his way. He informed everyone present that not the minutes would be unable to be approved until there was a quorum but invited everyone to read and look over the Minutes. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Steve Rosmarin. Due to a lack of a quorum, only five Commissioners present, the approval of minutes was postponed.

#### Roll Call

As noted above.

#### Chairman's Report

Vice Chair Gay hopes everyone had a glorious and safe New Year. He will leave the Chairman's Report to Chair Archuleta to give when he arrives.

#### Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

Bea Cohen, will be 102 years of age next month was in World War I as a young child from Romania. Her husband was a 3½ year as a prisoner of war in Corregidor. She stated he husband was a Gunnery Master Sergeant before he retired in 1955. He worked for Hughes and then he went to guarding Christmas trees in La Tijera. She started working at 16 years of age to help because his pension wasn't enough to live on. Ms. Cohen stated that her husband was refused payment on his retirement and pension together; she wanted to know why this did happen when she knows veterans that get both retirement and pension checks. Ms. Cohen tearfully stated that her husband took it out on her; they both had PTSD as well as the children, they had two little girls.

Commissioner Culmer stated that unfortunately that was the law back then, but in the last 9 years veterans have started to receive both checks and he understands that what happened to her husband was unfair but after 2014

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that will no longer be a fact. Ms. Cohen asked to have that in writing and that her husband passed away in 2003 and it hasn't been easy to get over his death.

Ms. Cohen stated that she doesn't understand how an illegal alien is able to get free benefits and she has to pay a co-payment at the VA.

She also informed that she has called 311 to report branches on the roof of her property that need trimming and no one has responded to her calls. She is concerned that the shingles will be damaged because of all the weight and the debris from the branch but doesn't know who else to call.

Chair Archuleta thanked Ms. Cohen for her service and her sacrifice. He also told her that she could consider going to the West Los Angeles Home and she stated she is very independent and likes to live in her house. Chair Archuleta thanked her for being an inspiration and said the Commission would look to see how they could assist her with her present issues.

Jeanne Bonfilio, Public Information Officer, wanted to remind everyone on the Veterans Homes in Barstow there is immediate occupancy. They have the independent Living Unit. And the Intermediate Nursing Care Unit and it's not as far as people would think. She distributed handouts on the Veterans Homes and a fact sheet on the West Los Angeles (WLA) Home including a benefits overview for the veteran homes.

Chair Archuleta inquired if there is a waiting list of people that are waiting to be processed and Ms. Bonfilio responded that there are five waiting to be processed for the WLA Home. There are priorities that would take a preference like a homeless veteran or a medal of honor recipient or prisoner of war. But until all the criteria's are met then the paperwork is processed.

Commissioner Rosmarin stated that Jeanne Bonfilio is doing a great job of getting the word out on the Homes and what the Homes offer. The Home has all the amenities you can need, a television in every room, three meals a day and snacks plus medical and dental care.

Chair Archuleta asked for a motion for the approval of the December 14, 2011 Minutes. Commissioner Rodriguez motioned to approve the Minutes of December 14<sup>th</sup> and it was seconded by Commissioner Gay and they were approved unanimously.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chair Archuleta stated the he is able to go throughout the County and speak at various organizations about the Commission and on what the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs is doing; the County is being proactive. He told Colonel Smith that finally someone is listening and finding homeless veterans and giving them the benefits they're entitled to, "Thank you Colonel." He stated he was glad to hear the Homes are doing well; the leadership at CDVA with General Gravett they are doing a great job!

### **Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Renovation – Bill Gelpi**

Mr. Bill Gelpi was unable to attend meeting.

### **VA Long Beach Healthcare System – Alice Martinez**

Ms. Alice Martinez was unable to attend meeting.

### **VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center – Ronald Hamm, M.D.**

Dr. Hamm was unable to attend meeting.

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**VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center – Ralph Tillman**

Mr. Ralph Tillman was unable to attend meeting.

**US VETS Initiative Workforce Program – Jaclyn Paxton/La Trice McBride**

Jaclyn Paxton, Women Homeless Vets, is a non-profit that is dedicated to serve those that have served. Their goal is to get homeless women veterans back into the workforce. They provide an intensive therapy to help the women regain their self-image and confidence. Her job is to get them a paycheck so her goal is to immediately get them hired. They are here to ask the Commission for support to hold their 2<sup>nd</sup> Female Veteran Stand Down.

La Trice McBride, Army veteran, at their first Stand Down last year they had assisted over 180 homeless female veterans. They had 95 vendors in one location to provide One-Stop services. They would like at this year's 2<sup>nd</sup> Stand Down to assist 500 females veterans. She would like to ask the Commission to support the event as a sponsor and help them with the Department of Parks and Recreation in getting permits for the event. The target date for the Stand Down is July 20<sup>th</sup> and they would like it to be in Los Angeles. They would like financial support as a sponsor or assistance with advertisements and PSAs. The first planning meeting is scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup> at US VETS on 2001 River Avenue, Long Beach.

Chair Archuleta stated that they can possibly use a County Park and Colonel Smith could possibly help. The Chair encourages the partnership. Commissioner Gay said they are already steps ahead and that having the event at a Park and going through Parks and Recreation is the way to go.

Commissioner Stone stated she met the ladies at a breakfast for women veterans and attended last year's Stand Down. She has contacted her Supervisor and he's committed to help.

Commissioner Rodriguez inquired as to why they are leaving Long Beach and wanting to have the event in Los Angeles. Chair Archuleta asked if the majority of the women veterans came from the Los Angeles area. Ms. McBride responded that most women were traveling from Los Angeles to Long Beach and some were finding the commute difficult.

Colonel Smith encouraged them to contact Mr. Bill Hoston and Tamiko Hirano, ESGR and Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles, who last year obtained 500 jobs for veterans,

Chair Archuleta congratulated and said the Commission acknowledges all the work they are doing for the female veterans.

**Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin**

Commissioner Steve Rosmarin stated that the paperwork to process the 501©3 form is in process. He also stated that this year's motorcycle ride will be on September 23, 2012.

Chair Archuleta asked how was the Christmas Holiday at the Home and Commissioner Rosmarin stated that they had a Christmas, New Year and a Hanukah party. He said the Jewish War Veterans distributed 650 gifts at the VA Hospital on Christmas Day.

**Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith**

Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director, Military and Veterans Affairs provided the following report:

- Total number of Activated Reservists and National Guard Personnel continues to slowly decrease. Currently there are 85,976.
- Armed Forces Recruiting continues strong with all of the Service Branches meeting their December targets.

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- Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Air Force Gen. Craig McKinley became a statutory member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act also reestablished the position of Vice Chief of the National Guard Bureau and requires that the National Guard General Officers be considered for Command of US Army North and US Air Force North.
- Department Budget request for FY 2012-13 includes restoring 3 staff positions for Bob Hope Patriotic Hall.
- Jobless veterans rate 33.2% --- civilian 14.9%.  
Female veterans rate 16.8% --- civilian 7.8%
- Collaboration with Department of Mental Health to co-locate personnel at DMVA Field Offices.
- Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Ad-Hoc Committee on Veterans proposed initiative for County Interagency Council on Veterans.
- Met with Secretary Peter Gravett on December 22 and awaiting his concept papers for State Interagency Concept/ organization and rules of engagement among other topics.
- Tomorrow will meet with DPSS Ad-Hoc Committee on veterans.
- CAL Vet Board meeting today.
- Attending the Dedication of Project 402 and the naming of the Maj. Charles Robert Soltes, Jr. Blind Rehab Center at VA Long Beach on January 25, 2012.
- Attending the CACVSO Conference January 30-February 3, 2012 in San Diego.
- DMVA website update is underway.
- In the next two weeks will resend previous letters to VA Deputy Secretary, DoD and President Uniformed Services University and others on Post-Traumatic Stress terminology; also supported by and used by the Department of Army Vice Chief Gen. Chiarelli.
- On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 US VETS opened new building West Side II for 192 rooms of permanent Cloud Burst housing. Located at their Inglewood site it raises the total transitional and permanent housing rooms to 742. Since opening in 1993 the site has helped over 20,000 vets. Colonel Smith received a plaque as founding Chairman (14yrs) and subsequent support.

Commissioner Stone inquired that a few months back USC gave out a number of 85,000 – 90,000 veterans returning is this accurate and Colonel Smith responded that historically California receives 30,000 veterans each year. There is no projection. He provided the State with an educated guess on homeless women veterans early today.

Commissioner Stone inquired as to whom is deciding who goes back into Bob Hope Patriotic Hall and Colonel Smith responded that he is very active in this venture. Commissioner Stone asked if there were still spots open and Colonel Smith stated that there will be a veteran organization meeting to explain the criteria of residing at the Hall. He also said that the tenants are aware that some will be returning to the Hall and possibly not to the same floor and/or room.

### **New Business**

No new business.

### **Item's for Next Month's Agenda**

- Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

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- VA Long Beach Healthcare System\_– Alice Martinez or a representative
- Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Renovation Update – Bill Gelpi
- Ronald Hamm. M.D. – VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center
- Ralph Tillman – Veterans Administration Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Center
- Commissioner Stephanie Ramon Rodriguez will invite two Veterans for February's meeting to offer the Invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Good of the Order**

Commissioner Culmer; stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Rosmarin; stated he had some bad news; Lou Koff lost his mother a couple of days ago and expressed his condolences. The Jewish War Veteran National Commander will be visiting the last week in March. He thanked all the veterans present for helping at the Home and for the Department staff doing a good job throughout the year.

Commissioner Stone; stated she attended the women veteran's breakfast on December 20<sup>th</sup> sponsored by Goodwill as did Ms. Bea Cohen. Women share and talk of things not shared in public. There will be a men's networking breakfast and encourages all to attend. Last month attended the DPSS meeting Ad-Hoc Committee for Veterans and they want to help same as The Workforce Investment Board is providing funds for program that are placing veterans with jobs and trainings to better meet the needs of Los Angeles County veterans.

Commissioner Rodriguez; stated that President Barack Obama signed S. 849, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2011, into law. This 3.6% cost of living adjustment, or COLA, affects veterans receiving compensation for service-connected disabilities, as well as the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation of veterans who died as a result of service.

Commissioner Gay; stated a New Year, a new Director, Gen. Gravett and Colonel Smith to make sure we are all on the same wave length. "Happy and Safe New Year!" He had a bit of bad health but is feeling a lot better.

Tamiko Hirano, Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles, wanted the Commission to know that she will be going to Washington, D.C and meeting with DoD on employment issues and how it's affecting the veterans. She is the Western Region representative (for 14 States and territories) and the Ombudsman. She is the mediator for the Guard and Reserve and would like to be able to pass on any information to the Commission from a National Stand Point and local level. She requested to be added to the Agenda for February.

Chair Archuleta; thanked the Commissioners and those present for their participation last year. He thanked Colonel Smith and stated he looked forward to returning to Bob Hope Patriotic Hall. He also thanked Commissioner Stone for all the work she is doing on behalf of the women veterans, the widows, aunts, grandmothers, sisters. There are more women in the Forces now this is the time to reach out. He asked for prayers for his son going to Afghanistan the first week of February with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. His second son is getting his Masters at George Washington University.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Commissioner Rodriguez and seconded by Commissioner Gay. Chair Archuleta adjourned meeting at 3:05 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas  
Executive Secretary  
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Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, February 8, 2012 at 1:30 p.m. in Suite 100 at the Department of Public Social Services site at 2615 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA.